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ABSTRACT

The Learning Development and Evaluation Center (LDEC) at Florida A&M University offers students with specific learning disabilities the opportunity to succeed in postsecondary education. LDEC provides psychoeducational assessments upon which an individualized educational plan is based. Guidelines encompass initial screening procedures, ongoing evaluation, and recordkeeping. Courses required for each of four terms to correct reading problems include learning strategies, content course reading, study skills, and vocabulary improvement. Areas of emphasis for planning successful transitions between secondary and postsecondary programs include teaching students to use their time efficiently; cope with problems in a mature manner; and develop personalized study strategies to improve goal setting, monitoring, and self-evaluation techniques. A cooperative network of secondary and postsecondary support persons is critical to transition success. (CL)

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A PROCESS FOR TRANSITION FROM SECONDARY TO POSTSECONDARY STUDIES FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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A Promising Practice: Postsecondary Education

Introduction

The transition phase from secondary to postsecondary studies is a new and exciting field for educators of learning disabled adults. Model programs are being designed and implemented to serve this population. One such program is the Learning Development and Evaluation Center (LDEC) at Florida A&M University (FAMU). This program meets the standards provided by federal and state laws concerning adult students with a learning disability who wish to pursue college-level studies. It is the intent of the LDEC to provide opportunities for excellence in a caring atmosphere to all students regardless of physical differences, culturality, or ethnicity. Administration, faculty, staff, and student-assistants offer all incoming students an opportunity to achieve their optimal level in their chosen area of interest in a non-threatening, pleasant atomsphere.

FAMU provides an ideal program for the student with a learning disability who is task-committed and desires an opportunity to succeed. Special considerations are made to accomodate students to the maximum extent possible without altering the content level of coursework. Neither administration, faculty, staff, nor students have found a learning disability to be a reason for failure or rejection.

The Center

The LDEC was developed specifically for students with one or more specific learning disabilities. The primary objective of the center is to offer students with specific learning disabilities, who have the

potential to successfully compete in college level studies, accessibility to postsecondary education programs at FAMU.

The program provides a total psycho-educational assessment for each participant. Chart A is a graphic representation of a typical psycho-educational assessment battery. This diagnostic information provides the basis utilized to design an individualized educational plan for each student. The educational plan provides strategies for developing skills not only to compensate for deficiencies but also strategies that will ameliorate such deficits if possible. Support services in the manner of compensatory aids are provided; however, each student is encouraged to use only those aids necessary for course success and to work toward developing study skills for self-reliance in lieu of using compensatory aids. Course requirements are never compromised in scope or depth.

Chart A

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT
AND SCREENING

Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-educational Battery
(Parts One-Four)

Slossons Intelligence Test

Diagnostic Tests

Math	Reading	Writing/Spelling
DAB	SORT	DAB
WRAT	WRAT	TOWL
	WRMT	WRAT
		BODER
Prescription	Prescription	Prescription

Other diagnostic tests or referrals as deemed appropriate, e.g., phonics, medical, Vocational Rehabilitation.

*Note: Key to Test Titles

SIT (Slossons Intelligence Test)
WISC-R (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised)
Key Math (Diagnostic Arithmetic Test)
DAB (Diagnostic Achievement Battery)
SORT (Slossons Oral Reading Test)
WRAT (Wide Range Achievement Test)
WRMT (Woodcock Reading Mastery Test)
TOWL (Test of Written Language)
Boder (The Boder Test of Reading and Spelling Patterns)
WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Test)

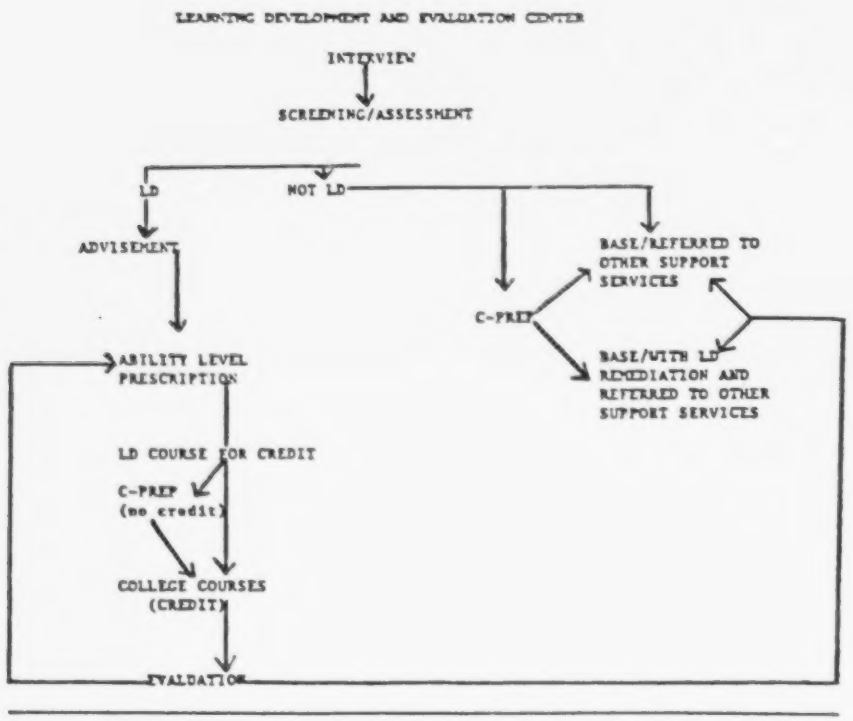
Philosophy

The underlying philosophy of the LDEC is three fold. First of all, students with specific learning disabilities can successfully pursue college level studies with a reasonable expectation for degree success. Secondly, students who are provided individualized instruction to ameliorate learning deficits can reach a higher level of success. Thirdly, preparation for postsecondary studies for students with specific learning disabilities should begin early. Because of the necessity for early intervention, the LDEC incorporates an outreach component to the public schools system.

Students with specific learning disabilities have a set of learning abilities unique to each individual. Learning strategies that are effective with one student may be of no value for another student who has similar learning problems; consequently, educational programs must be individually designed with unique changes incorporated as necessary. On-going evaluation ensures that valuable time is not depleted pursuing learning strategies that prove to be unsuccessful.

The learning development component of the center is based on the discrepancy model. The discrepancy model emphasizes the difference between expected achievement level and the actual achievement level. For a depictive representation of the learning development and evaluation components of the program, see Chart B. Chart B explains graphically the plan a student entering the program may expect to follow.

Chart B



Program Guidelines

1. An initial intake interview is conducted by a learning development specialist to provide students with an orientation to the program and its assessment procedures. Students who were enrolled in learning disabled classes in public schools are accepted.

2. Self-identified students with indicators of having a learning disability are selected for screening from a questionnaire.

3. Students are selected on the basis of the results from an intelligence test and the Woodcock-Johnson-Psycho-educational battery.

4. The screening results are shared with the student. Further

assessment is then recommended or the student is referred to an alternate support service.

5. The administering of a battery of evaluative tests for identification of specific strengths and weaknesses is given each student. All students are given the total battery of tests regardless of prior tests taken or lack of prior tests.

6. A prescription is then individually designed to correlate with the ability and achievement levels for each student. Modifications deemed necessary for success in individual college courses are listed.

7. Students who must take College-prep courses (C-prep) (non-credit) also take one learning disabilities/reading course (credit), and college level courses for credit for any remaining hours necessary to maintain full time enrollment.

8. After an evaluation the students continue in the program taking College-prep courses, or move up to the Basic Academic Skills Ehancement (BASE) program, and continue regular program courses as appropriate. Evaluation is on-going and comprehensive.

9. A program plan of study is completed for each student for advisement purposes. This plan is a method for keeping a record of all classes taken, grades, and future classes needed. In fact, this one record provides an academic schemata from entrance through graduation (see attachment for Program Plan of Study).

Reading courses to be taken for regular college credit have been enhanced to include information concerning learning disabilities and learning development. All students take four terms of reading courses.

After the fourth term, students are re-evaluated and a decision is made as to whether or not they should continue their enhanced reading courses for additional instruction with no college credit awarded. The following is a list of courses required for each term designed to correct reading problems:

1st Term: Learning Strategies/LD - Nature and characteristics of learning disabilities and learning strategies are designed to compensate for learning deficits.

2nd Term: Content Course Reading/LD - Includes the application of language arts and study skills to content areas and mini-courses in the different content areas such as: history, psychology, biology, etc. Students attend lectures and complete assigned readings and written assignments. The course provides a simulated class experience in varied content areas, including exams, oral presentations, and essays.

3rd Term: Study Skills - Students receive in-depth instruction in their area of most severe descrepancy. Topics to be covered include: outlining, summarizing, notetaking, test-taking techniques, report writing, library skills, etc.

4th Term: Vocabulary Improvement - Students are presented vocabulary words to increase their written and speaking vocabulary. Spelling techniques are also covered in this course.

Program Summary

A number of colleges and universities admit students with learning disabilities; however, few institutions provide special diagnostic and learning development clinics for the students. FAMU has taken the opportunity to be a leader in the area of postsecondary education for learning disabled students and is determined to meet the challenge of providing a program consistent with the objective, "Excellence With Caring", of FAMU President, Dr. Frederick S. Humphries.

The University provides support services and lab study experiences for all students in the various disciplines. The learning disabled students are encouraged to avail themselves of these valuable supportive learning opportunities. It is also recommended that each student spend a minimum of 20 hours per week in the Center to receive additional counseling, instruction, tutoring, special assistance, and guidance.

Transition

Transition from secondary to postsecondary educational studies is an area of need for students with specific learning disabilities if they are to reach their highest potential. Many federal and state programs are concerned with the transition of handicapped students to the world of work. However, little attention has been given to the plight of students with handicapping conditions who wish to pursue college level studies. At the LDEC we have noted some areas of need that should be addressed to ensure that students with learning disabilities have a smooth transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

The LDEC staff is available to the public schools systems for presentations, workshops, in-service, and technical assistance to

encourage students enrolled in the SLD programs to make a decision concerning postsecondary goals as early as middle school. These students should be informed that postsecondary studies are open to them and is a viable option. Emphasis should be made that an early decision will assure them of a smoother transition period and will subsequently improve their chances of success.

If the transition from secondary to postsecondary education is to be smooth, learning disabled students at the middle and high school levels must begin to prepare for college level studies. Some areas that require consideration are listed below; however, the list is not all inclusive nor is it intended to be:

1. Students need to be taught functional academic skills to the highest level possible. Learning development must continue throughout the middle and high school years to prepare the students with learning disabilities to become successful college students.

2. It is imperative that students learn how to cope with the transition from one level to the next. This can be taught by identifying some possible problem situations that might occur and some possible solutions, e.g., role playing.

3. Students need to learn how to maximize time efficiency to increase their independence. The application of useful study skills is imperative to ensure independence and self-sufficiency.

4. Students need to be able to cope with social and personal problems in a mature way. A major concern at the postsecondary level is the social immaturity of incoming college freshmen.

Due to the low level of maturity of most college freshmen who have a learning disability, the first year on campus is more of a period of social adjustment than a time of academic adjustment. Learning disabled students often continue to live at home after high school graduation. For example, the State of Vermont reported that 75% of their special education students continue to live with their parents after high school graduation for an extended period of time. Activities to enhance maturity and personal responsibilities should be taught at high school. With cooperation between secondary and postsecondary educators, the level of social maturity can be raised.

5. Students should be allowed to attend all regular secondary classes while receiving support services from a special teacher or peer tutor. This is the same manner in which the post-secondary educational experiences are presented.

6. Special focus should be placed not only on the subject matter to be learned but how to learn as well.

7. Students should be assisted in developing personalized study strategies to improve goal-setting, monitoring, and self-evaluation techniques.

8. A program at the high school level should be designed to include systematic monitoring with documented evidence of results to assure, protect, and provide the most successful learning strategies. This data should include both successes and failures.

9. Students need a cooperative network between secondary and

postsecondary support persons. This cooperative network is necessary if students with learning disabilities are to be successful graduates from institutions of higher learning. Although the university, most of all, must provide comprehensive supportive services, it is necessary that the public schools become aware and get involved in the preparation for transition to the higher level studies.

10. School personnel should feel free to experiment, thus, creating innovative programs for students with learning problems.

Conclusion

Services for secondary and postsecondary learning disabled students have increased rapidly during the past several years. Programs have been designed or expanded to deal with the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. However, many challenges remain. There have been a number of model programs designed to meet the needs of the learning disabled from high school through postsecondary education. The Learning Development and Evaluation Center at Florida A&M University is an exemplary model program. However, to design a model program is not enough, we must devise a vehicle of communication for dissemination of the models to state and local educational agencies throughout the nation. If the learning disabled population is to reach maximum potential and have adequate support, a network of cooperative efforts must be implemented. Transitional planning which provides supportive services to the learning disabled must, of necessity, include a wide range of educational institutions and school agencies. These service providers must develop a cooperative plan that is open to information sharing and that is comprehensive in the services provided. Such a plan

would decrease the duplication of services provided and would subsequently increase the service options.

Attachment

PROGRAM OF STUDY
FOR

_____
Student Name

PROGRAM OF EMPHASIS

_____
Major

School of General Studies
Learning Development and Evaluation Center
Dr. Sharon R. Wooten, Director

Pre-Collegiate
Proposed Schedule

Course Number	First Semester	Course Number	Second Semester	Course Number	Third Semester
	Repetition (if necessary)				

* = Completed o = Minimum Score
x = Acceptable Score

Entrance Exam _____ Date Taken

Exit Exam _____ Date Taken
(must be comparable to ACT or SAT)

Repeat _____ Date Taken

	ACT		SAT	
Reading		o[ ]		o[ ]
Writing		o[ ]		o[ ]
Math		o[ ]		o[ ]
Reading				
Writing				
Math				
Reading				
Writing				
Math				

PROGRAM OF STUDY: GENERAL EDUCATION

Course Number	Title	Hrs *	Course Number	Title	Hrs *
	English			Natural Sciences	
	total	9		total	8
	Humanities			Major Electives	
	total	6		total	12
	Social Sciences			Free Electives	
	total	6		total	8
	Health			American History	
	total	3		total	3
	General Psychology			Mathematics	
	total			total	6

* = Completed (T if transferred) General Education Total 60

CLAST* _____ Date Taken _____ Results

* = CLAST must be taken after 60 hours credit have been completed.

PROGRAM OF STUDY: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Major: _____ (30 hrs) Minor: _____ (18 hrs)

Course Number	Title	Hrs *	Course Number	Title	Hrs *
	Professional Curriculum Junior year			Approved Electives	
	total			total	
	Professional Curriculum Senior year			Approved Electives	
	total			total	

* = Completed (T if transferred) Minimum Professional Education Total 60

Grand Total ____

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